

Exploring the Many Roads to Quality Work, 5-24-18

Whitney Marsland: So we're about five minutes after 2:00, so I think that we will go ahead and get started.

So welcome to today's presentation, "Exploring the Many Roads to Quality Work: Insights from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston."

This webinar is part of the 2018 CED Grantee Capacity Building Series. This series consists of live webinar-based learning opportunities as well as information and resources and opportunities to engage with your program specialist and expert technical assistance providers. This series is designed to give you the support you need to successfully execute your projects, so keep an eye out for weekly e-mails that update you about upcoming events and provide important information for your grant.

I'm Whitney Marsland from ICF and I'm joined today by Gerald Shanklin from the Office of Community Services and our two guest presenters. Gerald will introduce shortly.

Today's presentation is being recorded, and you'll be able to access the recording on the Community Economic Development page of the USDF Website. And we'll provide you with more information on accessing the recording when it becomes available in an e-mail from the OCF Registrar after the presentation.

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And you can use the Q&A Feature to type content-related questions as you think of them throughout the presentation. And we will either break into the presentation to ask the question to the presenter, and they can provide an answer, or we'll save the questions to the end where we'll save some time for Q&A.

And when you send a question to the speakers, you'll want to select all panelists in the send to box. And we'll provide a reminder of how to ask these questions at the end of the call as well.

And time permitting, we'll also try to take some questions verbally over the phone, so we'll provide instructions on how to do that at the end of the call as well. But in the meantime, all attendees have been muted to kind of minimize any background noise during the presentation.

So now I will turn over to Gerald to get us started. Gerald, I think that you may be on mute.

Gerald Shanklin: Okay. Can you hear me now?

Whitney Marsland: Yes. We can hear you.

Gerald Shanklin: Okay. Hello, everybody. Welcome to today's webinar. I'm Gerald Shanklin, a program specialist with the Office of Community Services. As you all know, the goals and objectives of Community Economic Development Program, and we'll refer to it as CED, to create sustainable, permanent, full-time employment opportunities for individuals with low-income. You're all hard at work using your CED grant funds to create jobs in your communities. In the past few years those [inaudible] not only on how the CED program can help create jobs, but how it can create high-quality jobs that provide people with low-income with sufficient wages, benefits, and career opportunities to support their families and thrive economically.

The curve from experts in the area of job quality, a recent annual CED Grantee conferences and webinars, and we are excited to continue the conversation about what it means to create a quality job and to share strategies of how you with CED Grantees can ensure jobs that you create are high-quality jobs.

Today we are pleased to welcome two speakers from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston for part of the Federal -- of the Reserve Banks quality job initiative. They will share key data about job quality, highlight some examples of high-quality job creation and discuss a key resource that features much more information on this topic.

Sol Carbonell, assistant VP of the Bank is going to sub in today for Anjali Sakaria, who is ill. And so we're going to start off with her. But also she is very well versed in this topic today, and I'm certainly looking forward to hearing what she has to say. Gabriella Chiarenza focuses on projects that leverage the intersection of community development research and communications to convey complex findings to a wide range of audiences in an approachable and innovative ways, and seeks to improve public access, too, and understand and update [inaudible] information [inaudible].

She is the managing editor of *Invested* -- the Boston Fed interview-based publication, and you'll hear more about that during the presentation. So let's welcome Sol and Gabriella, and so thank you so much for being with us to share your work. And now I'm going to turn it over to Sol.

Sol Carbonell: ...for the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston to be here. Gabriella and I are very excited to share a little bit of what we've been learning so far in our journey on job quality.

So again, my name is Sol Carbonell. I'm an assistant Vice President here in Boston. I oversee part of the engagement team in community development. But I'll say -- I'll start with a sentence about the Federal Reserve Bank. For those of you that may not be familiar with the role of the Fed in this, I'll say that we are part of the central bank in the country, and we have a decentralized system.

And part of the mission of our system is really related to a dual mandate. We were created by Congress to fulfill two responsibilities. One is the idea of priceability, and that's when you hear the Fed talk about interest rates and some of that is related to our monetary policy

responsibilities. But we take -- we fulfill those responsibilities also with another -- part of a mandate in mind, which is related to what we call maximum employment.

So in community development we see a role in understanding the quality of jobs and the evolution of jobs in our economy as truly supporting this mandate from the Federal Reserve System as a whole. So we're really excited to be able to share some of those lessons with you all.

Part of how we wanted to start this conversation -- and I know we are eager to get all your questions, too, because it sounds like you have been discussing this topic before -- part of how we want to start this conversation is really sharing with you some pieces of data that were just released recently to ground our conversation on what the economy looks like today. And this is with the idea of truly us envisioning an economy that works for both workers and businesses, and an economy in which both of these entities and individuals and families can thrive together.

So our journey into job quality really started with this vision for an inclusive economy that works for both businesses and workers, and a recognition that we need to think differently about some of our approaches to accomplishing this. Part of the role that community development plays in the Federal Reserve is to try to surface how low-income people experience the economy and how -- and really lending a research and analytical capabilities to understand how we can form policy and practice to improve the life of low-income individuals. So that's the lens in which we approach our work.

So let's move on to how we want to start this conversation with really some details on a recent survey that was just released, so this is really fresh, to ground the conversation on what we're seeing in the economy. This is a report on the economic well-being of U.S. households, and it was from the data collected in 2017, and again, it was just released a few days ago.

So I'll start with a few highlights of this. I think for those of you that are doing work on the ground, this is -- nothing that you see here is going to be a surprise, because this is what you -- the people that you're serving on a day-to-day basis are experiencing this, so we're able to capture some of this and aggregate it.

So let's go over this. So 40 percent of adults do not have a savings to cover an unexpected expense of \$400. Over 20 percent of adults are not able to pay all their current month's bills in full. About 30 percent of adults have family income that varies from month to month, and 10 percent experienced hardship because of monthly changes in income. And this is important, and when we talk a little bit more about how we define job quality, we'll mention things like income stability, income predictability, so keep these numbers in mind when we talk about that, too.

At the same time, about 16 percent of workers have irregular work schedules imposed by the employer, and 10 percent receive their work schedules less than a week in advance. So think about the implications for those that are trying to plan for childcare or other things that happen in a household. That's only 10 percent of the workers that receive the work less than a week in advance.

Over 25 percent of adults skip necessary medical care in 2017 due to being unable to afford the costs. And last but not least, less than 20 percent of non-retired adults think that their retirement savings are on track, and 25 percent have no retirement savings or pension at all. So that's the context for how we want to ground the conversation today.

So when we started thinking about understanding the evolution of the economy and workers and how low-income workers are varying in New England, which is the region that we serve, we decided to take a look at who is earning less than \$15 an hour. And let me clarify, not because we are endorsing a specific policy, because we can't do that at the Fed, but most importantly because this is the number that has been in the policy debate, and we think it's important that we understand what's behind this and we demystify some of what this population looks like and what assumptions people may have about this population as well.

So I should have actually said in the beginning that all the opinions that I have to say today are my own opinions and don't represent the opinions of my colleagues at the Federal Reserve System or the Board of Governors, so that's the standard disclaimer that everyone at the Fed has to say, so I'm saying it a little bit later. But that applies to whatever I said before.

So let's think a little bit about who's earning below \$15 an hour, and this is -- it sounds like this is national data as well. So one of the things that was interesting for us in New England it was that it was really one-third of the workers were earning less than \$15 an hour. Now when you think about this population, some may be tempted to think that they are either specific type of individual or a young teen maybe just getting started in their career, or somebody that is just having a part-time side job, so that's not really what we found.

So if you think about it, if you look at some of those points, we found that the majority of them are women, are disproportionately black and Latino. The vast majority are adults, so not necessarily the teens getting started in their careers. More than half actually have some college education and approximately 20 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. So that's also surprising because the other myth out there is that, sure, as you're -- regardless of whether the age factor, also I see if you have maybe less education you'll see lower wages. But in some cases, that wasn't necessarily the situation. And again, most are primary earners in their families and most are full-time workers.

So this gives you a sense of who is earning below \$15 in New England. And my assumption is that as we begin to look -- do some of the analysis in other parts of the country, some of these may hold, too, as well.

So when we think about how we want to -- we're interested in the outcomes, which is ultimately improving employment opportunities for low-income individuals. So as we think about these outcomes, what we've seen is that most of the time we can think about the strategies that organizations or individuals are employing in sort of three different buckets. One is the idea of upskilling the worker. So this is where you can think about access to education and training opportunities and thinking about what the jobs of the future are going to need and making sure that our educational institutions are preparing individuals for those types of jobs, so all of those strategies fall in this category of upskilling the worker.

The third one -- the second one is removing barriers to employment, so this is when you think about -- when you can see -- focuses on transportation or childcare for example to make sure that workers can get to jobs and that they can participate in labor market.

And the third type of strategy, which is the one that we are really interested in understanding and thinking about how we make progress on that, is really the idea of changing the nature of work itself, thinking about how do we upgrade the jobs that are being generated in our economy, and actually understanding the evolution of the kinds of jobs that are available in our economy today. So those are the third type of strategies that we at the Boston Fed and a number of colleagues across the Federal Reserve system are trying to understand and are trying to think about it from a different perspective, from a worker perspective, what does that look like and what are the incentives that work and how do we get them.

So moving on to the next slide, how we arrived at that was really through an understanding of how jobs have evolved over time in our economy. And we've seen a number of things. On the one hand we've seen this idea of wage polarization. And some of the charts that you have in front of you are depicting some of this. So we see the hourly wages for workers by wage percentiles. And what you've seen, you can look at it in different ways, but ultimately what this is saying is that for the lowest income workers, those that are at the bottom, their wages have not necessarily increased.

So when the economy actually looked at this they talked about this idea of decoupling. This -- there was a point in time in which profits were coupled with wages increases. So profits increased and through the outputs of work increased that there was a point in time in which the workers were actually seeing the benefit of that. And there's a point in time in which you see these two lines that diverge and in the context of skyrocketing [inaudible] and corporation profits and some of that. What a lot of the experts point out is this moment, again, in which wages have been decoupled with profits and outcomes for worker.

The other thing that we've -- phenomenon that we are serving is really this idea of hollowing out of the middle class jobs. So as you think about the progression and the changes in employment by skill level, this is the graph that you see on the left. From 1980 to 2005 you can see here that the highest percentages are on the far right and on the far left; right? So that means essentially that we're seeing a huge number of low wage work appearing in our economy, and low skill jobs. And at the same time, these high skill jobs that everybody talks about in tech and others where -- there was a conversation about preparing workers for the future, it's [inaudible] about those jobs. But that necessarily doesn't reflect what our -- that conversation doesn't necessarily reflect the fact that the jobs are growing in our economy are the low wage jobs, the service jobs, and other that's just that.

So you see some of that reflected in the chart on the right and the changes in employment by occupation by skill level, and it's part of the same picture that this idea that the service jobs are some of the fastest-growing jobs in our economy as well.

So when we put all of that together we start thinking about what does it mean to have a quality job today in the context of some of these things. So when we talk to both experts, economists, but also people in our region, workers themselves, these are some of the things that -- the aspects that we think are important. One is clearly wages, and you see it at the center, and that's for a reason. But there are a number of other factors that are related to access to affordable and quality benefits for example, and the predictability of the schedule, and other work conditions. And also at the same time, this idea of income stability in predictable income.

So not only knowing how much clearly the number of hours work is going to affect your income and having the ability to know that in advance and to know the period of time, it's clearly incredible helpful for workers to be able to plan ahead. So these are a lot of the elements that we think can truly affect the quality of a job. And one that is also important, I don't want to forget to mention it, is worker engagement and worker voice. And that can mean a lot of different things to different people, but I think what we mean here are two different things. One is the opportunity for workers to, yes, provide input in operations and ideas for how to do the job better, but also, and most importantly, is the ability to negotiate the terms of the employment and the conditions of employment as well, and having power to do that as well. So those are some of the elements that we think can clearly impact the quality of the job.

And then talk a little bit about the business perspective on this because it's not that -- we are thinking a lot these days about the language that we even use to describe some of these things. And it's not like we -- we understand the value of having a job, the value of having a better -- a first job as opposed to no job at all. But at the same time, we're trying to think about what the floor looks like for all workers regardless of where they are, who they are, their educational level, and some of those dimensions; right?

And what we observe is that that floor perhaps is at a place where -- where it is today may be a little different than where it was before, at least for some workers. So that's something that we're trying to understand. In terms of the business perspective, we are spending a lot of time trying to hear from businesses directly, visiting companies, and understanding from the research that tries to make the case for the business value in job quality.

So we've been impressed by the work of Zeynep Ton, and we wanted to highlight some of that here, because he has done some interesting work in the retail sector in particular, and really starting companies like Costco, Trader Joes, QuikTrip. And so she's a business professor at MIT in the school of management. And a lot of what she talks about really -- she started this from completely operations perspective and then she ended up working in job quality. And what she was trying to understand initially was the value that companies place in labor.

And what she learned was that companies that treated labor not necessarily as a cost that needs to be minimized, but a real asset that needs to be leveraged had a profound difference on how they looked at their operations and their effectiveness. And they were able to leverage that and use that to improve their operations, and their culture, and their way of doing business in the way that actually resulted in more profits for the company.

So a lot of times there's this false debate about if we do something more for workers we're going to go at a business, and that's not necessarily what some of the research is saying on -- about some of these practices. There are clear benefits for companies around retention, and productivity, and morale, and some of the things that actually help them really do better -- be better businesses and produce better outcomes as companies and also for the workers.

And so in the New York Times there was a recent article that talked a little bit about this and it was surfacing a study that was done in Gap stores where they actually gave a set of -- it was a randomized control trial and they gave a set of managers the opportunity to play around with the flexibility that they were giving to some of their associates, and just to think about what the different outcomes when people were provided with consistent and better schedules. And what this study showed was that there was an increase in productivity in those stores where the managers were encouraged to do this. So that provided also some real insights from a retail company.

And I think as we see more and more companies in different industries playing around and experiment with different practices, we are looking forward to try to surface some of those and understand those, because it's clearly different depending on the industry in which the company operates and what the competitive pressures may be on them, or also what the revenue model looks like. And all of those things are really new ones, so you have to truly understand the business to understand how this may play around in this.

I recently had the chance to talk to the owner of a manufacturing company in Aurora, Illinois, and some of these insights were really profound, share with me the transformation that he had seen in his company when they starting valuing frontline workers and thinking much more intentionally about the kind of culture that they wanted to create. And working with frontline workers that had been there in that company for a long time and engaging them in this process really resulted in that company to increase their profits and transform the company in a way that was really amazing to see.

So we found a lot of examples. I think we're eager to do more research and to provide more data, so that can hopefully inform practice and policy as well.

And clearly, the other piece I mentioned is we are an environment, one of the tightest labor markets that we've seen in New England and obviously in other parts of the country. And I think we've seen employers and we hear from even intermediaries that are working with employers and companies that want to become employers of choice and are having trouble attracting and retaining people. And I think a lot of times we hear from some of these intermediaries as well is that they are working with companies in a totally different way than they were before, and actually asking about, so what benefits do you offer now, or have you thought about the wages that you're providing.

And some of those conversations are really happening, so I think it's a good opportunity for those that are working with intermediaries to think about how could they strengthen those sort of relationships to continue to provide better value to businesses that are using those services as well, and also create values for both the company, but also the workers.

So there are number -- as we think about the incentives for improving job quality, I think this is - takes a multi-prong approach to get to those outcomes for more workers. So clearly public policy plays an incredibly important role and, in particular, industries for example when it might be harder for one employer to take a particular action. I think public policy can level the playing field sometimes, or also when we think about where the floor is for workers in general. I think there's clearly the debate nationally about the role of things like the minimum wage, or paid family medical leave, for example. I think there's public policy -- the role of public policy cannot be understated.

At the same time, there are other levers and mechanisms to incentivize and increase job quality, and those could include government contracts. We've seen in a number of cities of others start to experiment with some of this. And I think traditionally those focusing on contracts have usually tended to focus on the creation or preservation of jobs. That has been sort of the language that we've used. And I think we have to start asking ourselves about quality and how do we think about that, how would we measure that, and how do we make sure that we are providing the tools that those are going to be participating in contracts to be able to collect some of that affectively as well because there could be challenges around that, too.

And there are other incentives around procurement policies. We've seen a range of institutions from big to small banks or financial institutions that are truly leveraging their procurement to think about how to make progress in this space, so that's something to be thinking about. And also the role of community benefits agreements. Recently I was hearing in California there's some interesting experiments around this happening, and I'll be happy to provide more details if that's of interest to anyone on the call.

And then at the same time, I think CDFIs have been truly at the forefront of this work, and there are a number of other funds nationally, job quality fund that are, again, experimenting and thinking about how to best incentivize this and sharing lessons.

CDFIs, community development financial institutions, to play an incredibly important role in providing capital to small businesses or other entities across the country. In New England we are fortunate to have a number of CDFIs that have very proactively thought about how they could incorporate job quality criteria in their lending portfolio, so they're thinking actively about to mesh with this, how to work with companies that want to test ideas. And also I think all of this work comes with a recognition that we have to meet companies where they are.

And it's not a one-size-fits-all. CDFIs truly I think have an advantage in the fact that they have those relationships with businesses and companies and can meet businesses where they are, and think about how to make progress based on the company and where they want to be heading. So I think this is -- being flexible, also, about what we mean, how to improve job quality and making sure that we are meeting employers where they are and engaging them in how they can make progress to begin the conversation I think is really important as well.

So in terms of what we're doing, I just want to end with this and also pass it to my colleague, Gabriella, so that she can tell us a little bit more about Invested, which is something we're really

excited about. We're really trying to engage as many prospective as we can on this issue, particularly understanding the voice in surfacing voice from workers, but also the business community as well, and we're really intentional about that.

We think engaging employers is part of the solution and needs to be a key element of any strategic initiative around this, and that's partly what we are committed to doing. So at the Boston Fed we have a number of councils where we regularly get to hear about this different perspective, but we're up there, and we want to hear from people directly and surface some of that.

So I want to pass it to my colleague, Gabriella, so that she can tell us and she can share with you how exactly we're doing that and what we're learning from that.

Gabriella Chiarenza: Thank you, Sol. I will try to be quick. I know we probably have some questions to get to, so I will go quickly here. So I am heading up our new Invested Magazine. We just launched it last year. The first issue came out in November of last year, and we've just launched our second issue yesterday, so it is hot off the press. For our first four issues of the magazine we're looking at aspects of job quality. And just to give you a little background on the publication, it's entirely interview-based and it's entirely online and we're hoping to use that media to take advantage of multimedia opportunities with that.

As Sol mentioned, we're really looking for a mix of voices, so we've been talking to people on the ground across New England, including researchers and experts in the traditional sense, but we also consider workers and employers and people who are working with those groups to be experts on this as well. So we've spoken with a number of workers, a number of employers, some community organizations and others who are working with them.

And then each issue culminates in some recommendations that are based on what we've learned from the people we've spoken with. So I really encourage you to check it out. There is a link there. You can also just go to bostonfed.org/getinvested, and if you have any trouble just let me know.

Lara had mentioned that she wanted me to say a little bit about some of the things that we've learned so far.

So with our first two issues -- our first issue was on flexible and unpredictable scheduling, and our second issue looks more at worker voice both from the traditional labor union front all the way through worker movements and employer engagements. So in these first two issues, a couple of things have sort of floated to the surface about quality jobs, and they really kind of go in two areas, one of the philosophy.

So the philosophy of the leadership of the company is very important. If this is an important aspect to the CEO, the people who are in charge of making the rules of the company, it filters down to everyone in the company and leads to a better work experience.

So for example, one of the companies that we visited for our second issue is called Surtronics. It's a small contract manufacturer in New Hampshire, and it's run by a woman who came out of social work, just came into electronic manufacturing from something completely different, and she didn't know that much about electronic manufacturing, but she knew a lot about people. And so her whole philosophy is about treating her employees as people, as whole people with ideas and different skills. So at Surtronics they really focus everything they do around cross training and also providing opportunities for people to try new things, advance into different jobs, be part of decision making. They're also employee-owned, so that's an example of sort of a philosophy of the leadership coming down into benefitting all of the workers.

Also it's really important, as you probably imagine, that all the policies and practices that we're talking about really being formed by workers. If it's going to affect their lives on the job, they should have a voice in what that looks like. So, again, an example, we spoke with some folks at Matahari Women Workers' Center, which is here in Boston, and they are a group of domestic workers, mostly nannies, some cleaning people, and they have come together because they work in jobs where they're always isolated and they're often abused because they don't have the visibility of other workers, they don't have a union.

So being able to come together and work together for policy that advances what they need. So here in Massachusetts they were influential in passing the Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights, which just allows workers to have some of the same rights that you would have at other companies where you have more of those protections. They've also really focused on making sure that nannies have contracts so that they aren't abused on the job. So that's just an example of how workers can really create better policies and practices.

The other side of this is really about adaptation to change. So everyone we've spoken with has mentioned that the workforce is changing rapidly, the workplace is changing rapidly, so there are a couple of things here. One is technology. So in both issues we've really looked at how technology plays a role in some of these things. And, really, technology can be good or bad. It's not about the actual technology. It's about how it's used. So, for example, when we were looking at scheduling, there are a lot of new apps and software programs that allow managers to schedule everyone down to 15 minute shifts and change their shift at the last minute and really wreaked havoc on workers who are trying to plan the rest of their lives.

So there are several apps that are trying to sort of leverage this technology to be good for the workers. So we looked at one app called Shyft, S-h-y-f-t, and they are trying to give workers the power to set their own schedules, trade shifts, make it easier on managers as well because workers sort of take it upon themselves to make sure everything is covered, but that if they have an emergency last minute they can switch their shift, so it just empowers the worker to have a little more control over their schedule.

In terms of flexibility, both companies and organizations that are representing workers need to sort of be flexible and adjust to situations that might not be the norm. So in this issue that we've just put out yesterday, we looked at a Lobstermen Union in Maine. Lobstermen typically work completely on their own. There are 5,000 of them up and down the coast of Maine who are all in their own boats, and they hadn't really been working together at all. The lobster price fell and

they really needed to do something to protect themselves in their communities that relied so heavily on this industry, so they formed a union with the International Association of Machinists, a much larger union that was able to sort of help them navigate that. And now they're able to go to the statehouse in Augusta and stand up for themselves. It's a very interesting story.

The last thing on my agenda is that the workforce is really changing. The demographics of the workforce, the different skills that people bring, and also the types of jobs that are available. So all of that really comes out when we look at what jobs are available, what kind of quality a job means, and that's all I have to say. Sorry, I thought I had a last point there. So I would really encourage you to check out the issues. They're great. We have a lot of really wonderful viewpoints presented all across New England and beyond, some researchers really balanced with the voices of workers and employers. And we actually have some videos from our visits to some of these workplaces in this second issue, so please do check it out.

Sol Carbonell: All right. So we look forward to questions.

Whitney Marsland: Okay. Great. So thanks to the speakers for that presentation. And so now we have about 15 minutes to take some questions. So as a reminder, you can submit a written question through the Q&A feature in the WebEx platform. When you submit a question, make sure that you send to all panelists in the send to option so we're able to review your question and address it. You can also ask your question verbally.

So at this time, we will unmute everyone's line and you are welcomed to chime in with your question. In order to eliminate additional background noise, we ask that you're not currently -- if you're not asking a question, please mute your phone or computer. So we'll unmute you within the WebEx system and you can mute yourself on your end, and then when you have a question, you can unmute yourself and ask and we can address as many as possible.

If you have not muted yourself and we detect any background noise, we will kind of manually mute the lines within WebEx. So then if that is the case and you want to ask a question but your line is muted, you can just send us a note in the chat feature that we talked about at the beginning of the call and we will unmute you and you can ask your questions.

If you are asking a question over the phone, just introduce yourself and if you could say what organization that you're from, that would be helpful and you can do that as well when you submit a question, a written question via WebEx.

So we will give folks a few minutes to answer questions -- ask questions. And if there's someone on the line that has a question, feel free to chime in.

Gerald Shanklin: This is Gerald Shanklin from the Office of Community Services. I just had a question regarding the incentives that I think Sol talked about and one with government contracts. Do you have any examples of any covenants that might in a government contract currently?

Sol Carbonell: Yes. So let me mention a couple of things that we are learning about, so I don't want to hold everything as a best practice because I think we -- our criteria for best practice at the Fed is pretty lengthy, so I'll say that. Things that we're curious about include some effort from the financial institution that has actually asked all of their suppliers to use an assessment from B Lab, that certifies B corporations so that they can track with it -- B Lab is an organization that produced an assessment that measures a number of different dimensions. So beyond job quality they also consider the environment, for example, community engagement of the company and diversity practices and some other things.

So I think we've seen people experimenting with the idea of this assessment that B Lab provides and using some of that to prioritize suppliers that get specific scores within this assessment. We're also seeing on a more broad basis, there are a number of cities across the country that have launched what is called the "best for" effort that also leverages specific tools from this organization called B Lab and provides incentives in the form of awards that a city can -- it can offer to a business, not necessarily in contracting yet. I think there's some work that needs to happen in that front, which is currently being planned.

At the same time, we are curious about some efforts in California, and the most recent one that I've heard about is the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission which has actually formed an entire office around community benefits. I think they have about eight people working on that. And essentially what they do is they thought differently about how they do some of the contracting primarily for infrastructure.

If you think about infrastructure for utilities and the number of contracts to maintain some of the utility infrastructure. And they're basically providing -- usually what we've seen is that job quality is one component of a number of different criteria that either a specific company or government entity wants to use to rate a potential supplier or vendor or partner. So I think we've seen job quality emerge much more recently around some of those initiatives.

So I think there's more work that needs to be done in this space, but it's a really promising space, and I think it would be interesting -- for those of you that are interested in more, I know this summer we are going to be having a summer intern at the Boston Fed that is going to be cataloging some of these and having interviews to understand what the effectiveness has been in some of these practices, what the focus is incorporating some of these criteria into the processes, what they're seeing in terms of how companies respond to those or any challenges that they may have emerged, so we'll hopefully be tracking this in a more systematic way. And after the summer, we'll be able to provide more details.

But I would -- if you're curious about this, I would try to research some of the efforts by the B Lab and the best for -- best for New York, best for Rhode Island -- at least those are two that I can point to. And then this idea of community benefits in San Francisco.

Whitney Marsland: And that's actually a good segue because we received two questions over WebEx about the community benefit agreements that you mentioned, and if you could provide some examples of those and kind of what are they and how do they work.

Sol Carbonell: Right. So usually -- the example that I mentioned was in San Francisco, so that's one example. Usually how community benefit agreements come about is you have a specific organization or company that perhaps may be either opening in a particular location or expanding or there's some kind of change that happens and motivates some of this. And so just imagine the idea of let's say -- in New England we've seen this more recently, a casino opening up, or some kind of company opening up or expanding in a specific area. And this is where the negotiation power of the community comes into play, and through these set of processes, what gets established is the commitment of the organization to either provide jobs, office in a specific location, or source its job through a specific community, or contribute money to a specific cause in that community.

And what we're seeing more is that -- so in most of these agreements in the past have been really related to the idea of retaining and creating -- in particular recreating jobs for specific communities. Now what [inaudible] of your wages of those jobs are, I think it's now being more consistent or we're seeing more eagerness to establish those as well as opposed to just the idea of creating specific jobs. And then obviously there's this -- so this is the idea that there is basically like a contract between an organization, a company, and a specific community. And that may be an organization representing the community. Sometimes a particular city may play a role depending on what kind of ordinances that city has about developments that happens in place and where jobs need to come from or the wages that need to be paid for those jobs.

So there's a lot of variation around that as well, but that's usually how they come about. And there maybe someone else on the call that's an expert in community benefit agreements that may want to chime in on this as well. But that's something works for us to be -- that we're going to be looking into in more detail as I said over this summer, both the idea of community benefit agreements but also procurement practices more specifically.

Whitney Marsland: Great. Do we have anyone over the phone who wants to verbally ask a question? Remember if you want to ask a question over the phone to make sure that you have unmuted yourself. Okay. So we can go to some other written questions. Another question was, can you discuss additional information or resources on strategies for removing barriers to employment?

Sol Carbonell: So for that question -- I think that's a great question, too. I'll say we are also in parallel focusing on the question of childcare. And partly because we see childcare as the infrastructure to work and if working parents doesn't have access to reliable, affordable, and quality childcare you can expect the productivity of that person, the engagement in the labor market to be different. So we -- there's been a ton of efforts across the country that over time have emphasized the quality of childcare and the need to ensure for minimum standard and raise quality.

At the same time, I think we are interested in understanding, for example, childcare [inaudible] in different parts of the country and in parts of our region, particularly in the more rural areas of our region. Somebody may need to rely on much more informal care or family care or different form of care.

And what we see is that -- I think the challenge is that as a country we don't really have a good system for supporting working parents when it comes to childcare, so we have a very fragmented position of either vouchers or center-based care and some of that. So I think when it comes to barriers, the one, again, that we're focusing on is this one of childcare and this really intersection of affordability, quality, and availability to make sure that we're not losing the care out of childcare and to ensure that, yes, with minimum and acceptable levels of quality because no one wants to compromise on that that we can actually support working parents.

So I can -- for anyone interested in that type of barrier, we can go deeper into that and help connect with a staff that are working on this. I think when it comes to other types of barriers, transportation or others, we have colleagues across the system that had been experimenting -- just trying to understand, that is a very nuanced conversation, so I think depending on what part of the country you come from or even what part of a region you come from, the challenges and opportunities are going to be completely different, so I hate to make any broad statements because that's a very nuanced conversation as well.

I think for -- I would say that for anyone that is more interested in this broad idea of investing in the worker and training and skills, a great resource is the investinwork.org. It's a Website by the Federal Reserve System, and we have a number of publications already and the proceedings from a national conference that we hosted last year with experts on this topic. And also we have an upcoming book in the next couple of months we'll have a book that will be posted there as well.

And there's a lot to be said about promising approaches that are addressing skills. But again, we're not -- we are part of a system-wide effort in supporting some of our colleagues across the system on that, but we are trying to really put an emphasis on the idea of quality as our primary emphasis in Boston.

Whitney Marsland: So we have one minute left. I'll check in again to see if anyone wants to ask a verbal question. And if not, we have another written question. I think we have time for one more. So this question is, are you aware of any franchises emphasizing quality jobs?

Gabriella Chiarenza: That's a really good question. I'm sure there are. I can't think of any off the top of my head. Boloco [ph] -- Anjali is back and she says, Boloco, which is a -- are they local just to this -- to New England? I'm not sure.

Anjali Sakaria: Sweet Green is another.

Sol Carbonell: Sweet Green, Boloco.

Anjali Sakaria: QuikTrip is another. They're a southern and Midwestern chain. Costco is actually one that sets up a heavy premium on job quality.

Sol Carbonell: Some of these are examples that I mentioned before, are featured in [inaudible] book on job quality. It's called The Good Job Strategy, so for folks that want to be more

intimately familiar with some of these company's practices and with her framework for how to approach this. I encourage folks to check that out.

Whitney Marsland: And Gerald, do you have any last minute questions or any comments as we wrap up the call?

Gerald Shanklin: No. I just want to thank the panelists again. We're fortunate to have you guys and we want to certainly follow your work as you go forward. Thank you so much.

Sol Carbonell: Thank you so much.

Gabriella Chiarenza: Thank you.

Whitney Marsland: Yes. Thank you to the speakers for today's presentation. Just quickly before we wrap up, I just wanted to bring everyone's attention to next week's webinar, and just a reminder about that. It is partnering with the EPA Healthy Places for Health People Program Presentation, which will be next Thursday, May 31st at 2:00 p.m. We also encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to meet one-on-one with an expert technical assistance provider.

You can sign up at the link provided and you will be matched with a TA provider to participate in a virtual meeting. So you can use this time to get some guidance on any aspect of your project that is challenging or ask specific questions about something related to your grant. These TA providers are here for you, so please take advantage of this opportunity.

And as more webinars and different resources are available through these series, you'll be notified through the weekly 2018 CED Grantee Capacity Building series update e-mail sent through OCS.

So if you have any kind of follow-up questions for today's speakers, definitely send them to us at ocsregistrar@icf.com and we get those answered for you. Again, thank you for everyone for calling and for our speakers for today's presentation.

(END)